

Amendments to the Specification

TITLE

PUSHER APPARATUS FOR MERCHANDISE

DESCRIPTION

Technical field Field of the invention

The invention relates to the field of pusher apparatus, i.e. apparatus for pushing a stack of
5 items along a track. The main application for pusher apparatus is in merchandising of
items for sale, whereby the front item of the stack of merchandise is always pushed to the
front of the shelf. Pusher apparatus according to the invention may also operate
vertically or at other angles and words such as “front”, “forwards” and “backwards” in
this specification are not intended to limit its scope to horizontal operation. Pusher
10 apparatus may clearly also be used in other situations where items are to be dispensed to
a user, not necessarily for sale.

Background of the invention

It is known to use a pusher apparatus for automatically pushing items of merchandise to
15 the front of a shelf, where they are more readily visible and accessible to a potential
purchaser. This may particularly promote one type of merchandise, which is stacked on a
pusher apparatus and therefore prominent at the front of the shelf, over adjacent
merchandise that remains at the back of the shelf.

20 A known pusher apparatus comprises a pusher unit that slides on a track. The pusher unit
may be guided along the track by rails. The pusher unit is retracted against the force of a
spring so that a stack of merchandise can be placed along the track. When the pusher unit
is released, it urges the stack forwards until the front item of merchandise comes to rest
against a lip at the front of the track. As each item of merchandise is removed, the
25 remaining stack is urged forwards until the next item rests at the front of the track.
Known springs in such pusher apparatus either have a concertina shape with one end
attached to the back of the track and the other end attached to the pusher unit to push the
pusher unit forwards; or have a coiled configuration with one end attached to the front of
the track and the other end attached to the pusher unit to pull the pusher unit forwards.

front end of the track. Alternatively, the latch may be releasable by applying rearward pressure to the pusher.

~~The drawings~~ Brief description of the drawings

5 Figure 1 shows a pusher apparatus according to a first embodiment of the invention in vertical cross section on line I-I of Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows the pusher apparatus of Figure 1 in plan view, sectioned along line II-II of Figure 1.

10 Figures 3 and 4 show the pusher apparatus of Figure 1 in a perspective view and illustrate the operation of the latch mechanism.

Figure 5 shows in perspective view a pusher apparatus according to a second embodiment of the invention.

Figures 6, 7 and 8 show the pusher apparatus of Figure 5 in plan view, side view and end view respectively, each view having part of the housing cut away to reveal the interior.

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Detailed description of the invention ~~preferred embodiments~~

The pusher apparatus shown in Figures 1 to 4 comprises an elongate track 2, which in use rests on or is integral with a shelf (not shown) for displaying merchandise. A pusher unit 4 is mounted on the track 2 so as to be capable of sliding along the track 2. Merchandise 6 for display is stacked along the track 2 and is engaged by a pusher plate 8 of the pusher unit 4.

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A coil spring 10 is coiled about a spring axle 12 that is rotatably mounted in the pusher unit 4, one end of the spring being attached to a ring (not shown) freely rotatable on the spring axle 12. The other end of the spring is attached at 14 to the track 2, near to the front end of the track 2. As the pusher unit 4 is drawn back along the track to the position shown in Figure 1, the spring 10 uncoils and lies flat along the track 2. The natural tendency of the spring 10 to coil up again draws the pusher unit 4 forwards along the track 2, pushing the items of merchandise 6 on the track ahead of it, until the front item engages a lip 16 at the front end of the track 2. When the front item of merchandise is removed from the shelf, the spring 10 is free to recoil further and the pusher plate 8

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pushes the remaining stack of merchandise 6 forward until the next item rests against the lip 16 at the front of the track 2.